

File

Afghanistan: 2 Years of Occupation

December 1981



United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.

Following is a paper written by Eliza Van Hollen of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in December 1981. It is a sequel to Special Report No. 86, "Afghanistan: 18 Months of Occupation," and No. 79, "Afghanistan: A Year of Occupation."

Summary

Two years after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, the resistance to their military occupation and the Babrak Karmal government, which they installed, continues to mount. The extent of the area under the control of the freedom fighters (*mujahidin*) has increased steadily, despite Soviet military repression. The regime's top-priority political program to undermine popular support for the resistance movement has made little headway, and the Kabul government remains isolated and ineffectual.

The problems that have plagued the Soviets and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) from the beginning of the Soviet occupation have grown worse. Two years of harsh, often terrorizing military campaigns have multiplied the regime's enemies. The shortage of military manpower has worsened. The bitter feuding within the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) continues to erode the government's small political base. Opposition to the Soviet presence has even spread to the top levels of the party and government.

The Afghan nationalist movement has made considerable progress in consolidating its position in Afghanistan and improving its military capabilities. It

continues, however, to be highly fragmented and, therefore, lacks the advantage of centralized strategic planning and the international stature of a viable alternative national political movement. Perhaps the greatest liability growing out of the lack of cohesion in the resistance is that it encourages Moscow's calculations that it can exploit the many ethnic and tribal divisions to its ultimate advantage.

The war in Afghanistan has badly tarnished Moscow's reputation both because of the Soviets' callous disregard for the Afghan people's right to self-determination and because of the ability of the Afghan *mujahidin* to fight the Soviet occupation force to a standstill. Accumulating evidence of Soviet use of chemical warfare in Afghanistan throughout their 2-year occupation also is arousing international condemnation.

There are numerous signs that the Soviets have a more realistic appreciation of their difficulties now than they had a year ago and that they are searching for a new political formula with greater popular appeal. This perception could result in some reshuffling of officials and efforts to broaden the political base of the government. Any made-in-Moscow coalition, however, would be likely to arouse the same hostility as the current regime, as long as Soviet occupation forces remained in Afghanistan.

Even if Moscow were able to coopt non-Communist elements into a broadened government, the regime's dependence on the Soviet military presence would quickly vitiate any political gains.

Indeed, the recent introduction of more Soviet troops into Afghanistan, while not a massive reinforcement, underscores Moscow's continuing commitment to a military solution.

Moscow and Kabul agreed in August, after considerable tactical maneuvering, to an active role for the United Nations in seeking a political settlement of the Afghan problem. There is no indication, however, that the Soviets or their Afghan surrogates are prepared to yield on key substantive issues. The overwhelming international consensus demanding withdrawal of "the foreign troops" from Afghanistan was reaffirmed by a 116 to 23 vote in the U.N. General Assembly this fall. This margin represents an increase of four affirmative votes over the tally in November 1980 and of seven votes over the original ballot in January 1980.

The most recent U.N. vote demonstrates that, contrary to evident Soviet expectations, the international community is not allowing the Afghanistan issue to fade from view. Likewise, the ever-increasing refugee population in Pakistan—it has doubled since last December to a total of 2.5 million—and the continuing stream of defections from the Afghan Government and military serve to keep attention focused on this troubled land.

Moscow is willing to pay the price of international censure and apparently anticipates that a policy based on attrition and force eventually will achieve its objectives. Historical experience with Soviet aggression argues against hopes for a negotiated solution, but the tenacity of the Afghan resistance and the persistence of international protest represent unprecedented historical circumstances that clearly have upset Soviet calculations. In these circumstances, the Soviets may yet find that their long-term political interests are better served by regional stability through the restoration of Afghan independence and nonalignment.

Regime's Authority Shrinking

According to a former planning director in the Prime Minister's office, who defected to Pakistan in August 1981, 90% of Afghanistan's districts are under resistance control. The ex-official had attended a secret conference in Kabul in June at which provincial governors had given gloomy assessments of the situation in their respective jurisdictions. While 90% may be an exaggeration, the erosion of

government authority has been corroborated by foreign journalists who traveled with the *mujahidin* in the spring and summer of 1981. They describe being able to move freely, even in the daytime, in areas where a year earlier the presence of government security forces had necessitated extreme caution.

The much publicized, unsuccessful efforts of Soviet/Afghan troops to dislodge the *mujahidin* from strongholds in the Panjsher Valley (northeast of Kabul) and from the Paghman area (only 12 miles from the capital), illustrate the immense difficulties confronting the Soviets as they try to wrest strategic areas from the resistance.

Furthermore, the *mujahidin* have demonstrated during 1981 an impressive capability to bring the war to the major cities, where control is of paramount importance to the Babrak regime. The freedom fighters virtually held Qandahar for much of the summer and early fall; they have kept Herat in periodic turmoil; even in Kabul nightly gun battles, frequent assassinations, and intensifying attacks on government and Soviet installations attest to a significant *mujahidin* presence despite tight security and repeated house-to-house searches.

In the many areas of the country where the liberation movement exercises control, resistance leaders have set up their own administration, making laws, collecting taxes, dispensing justice, and providing services. Even in areas under nominal government authority (maintained by a military presence), the resistance often runs parallel governments. In the cities of Qandahar and Herat, for example, the *mujahidin* dictate curfew hours, establish price controls, and levy taxes. In almost all areas the dividing line between government and resistance authority will be even more clearly drawn at the edge of an important town, with the *mujahidin* controlling traffic, manning roadblocks, and levying duties just beyond this line. This is the situation that prevails just outside of Kabul. Local civilian and military authorities often buy a tenuous peace from the freedom fighters by supplying weapons and ammunition to them.

The *mujahidin* are also engaged in an ongoing battle with the regime for control over the major roads. They conduct ambushes of supply convoys on all the important routes, including the vital links between the Soviet border and Kabul. Recently, in an effort to protect the supply network, government forces have begun to clear away buildings and trees, which afford protective cover to the *mujahidin*, in a wide swath along the roads running north and south from Kabul.

DRA/Soviet Offensive to Counter the Resistance

Political Policy. From the early days of the Babrak regime and the Soviet occupation, the authorities have relentlessly pursued the related political and military goals of establishing the legitimacy of the Babrak government and defeating the nationalist military forces. Over the long run, the political/propaganda war is as important as military action and could ultimately be the decisive contest. If the population at large can be persuaded to drop its support for the resistance and accept a government that has Moscow's blessing, the *mujahidin* will become isolated and vulnerable. That the Soviets are aware of the importance of the political struggle is clear from the enormous effort they have undertaken to try to establish the legitimacy of the current regime and to convince the population of the regime's good faith with respect to such key issues as Islam, nationalities policy, amnesty for refugees and a revised land reform program.

The cornerstone of the political policy has been the formation of a National Fatherland Front (NFF), an umbrella organization composed initially of 12 institutions representing such elements of the population as trade unions, agricultural cooperatives, youth, women, writers, journalists, artists, scholars and religious leaders, and the tribes. Many of the founding organizations were either formed or held their first national meeting after a December 27, 1980, conference which launched the campaign to establish the NFF.

The founding congress of the front was finally held on June 15 after several postponements. It was portrayed as a contemporary version of a *Loya Jirga*—a traditional assembly of Afghanistan's tribal leaders convoked to make historic decisions. As such, it was intended to legitimize the Babrak regime. Indeed, in his "fundamental statement" to the NFF congress, Karmal claimed that the formation of the NFF was evidence of "the normalization of the situation" in Afghanistan; the unified support of all "patriotic forces" for PDPA principles; the "fraternity" of all of Afghanistan's social classes and ethnic groups; and the ability of the regime to solve difficult problems and create a new society.

A massive political and propaganda effort was devoted to creating the NFF and its constituent members, and the founding congress was portrayed as a momentous historic occasion. When the

Congress was finally held, however, it was generally recognized to be a sham. Relatively little has been heard of it since. Indeed, it was not until over 4 months later that an NFF committee was formed for Kabul Province.

Another important political move during 1981 was the creation of a Ministry of Nationalities and Tribal Affairs to replace the former Ministry of Border and Tribal Affairs. The new ministry institutionalizes the regime's nationalities policy to promote local language and culture. Like its Soviet model, this policy is designed to appeal to a sense of ethnic uniqueness. It is, in effect, a policy of divide and rule that could become an effective weapon for the Soviets in a country where minority ethnic groups have traditionally not been given due recognition.

The regime reintroduced land reform in August but revised the regulations to offer exemption from land confiscation in return for support for the Babrak regime. The exemptions are skewed to appeal to such key groups as the clergy, military officers, and tribal leaders. The incentives probably will have little impact as they are meaningless in the many areas where the government is too weak to impose a land reform program.

In September, the Presidium of the Revolutionary Council approved a new law on local organs of state power and administration and a new Council of Ministers law, which will strengthen and expand the role of the state in Afghan society. The "local organs" measure embodies the Soviet principle of "democratic centralism" in a system of local councils, which are portrayed as traditional *jirgas*. The regime claims the new law will reinforce democracy, but, in effect, it strengthens party control: Only the PDPA and PDPA auxiliary organizations can nominate candidates for election to the local councils.

There is no indication that these political measures have attracted support for the government. But the Soviets take a long-range view; many of these actions demonstrate that Moscow is counting on long-term benefits from the sovietization of the Afghan Government and party machinery.

Defense Policy. The Soviets are clearly under pressure to produce more immediate results from their military campaigns. During the first half of 1981, political strategy seemed to have the

higher priority, but by midsummer it became clear that the deteriorating security situation once again had become the paramount concern.

In August, the Afghan regime established new defense councils at the national, provincial, and district levels to concentrate all aspects of defense under strict party control. Announcing the formation of the new councils at a meeting of armed forces party activists, Babrak Karmal spoke of "troublesome and difficult conditions" and "increasing armed actions by counterrevolutionary elements." He said it was imperative for all forces to go on the offensive.

New defense councils, however, will not solve the overriding military problem—the critical shortage of manpower for the Afghan army, which stands at about 30,000 out of a normal strength of about 100,000. The lack of recruits is essentially a political problem and highlights the absence of government authority throughout most of the country.

Perhaps the Soviets' most serious miscalculation when they invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 was a belief that they could reverse the already far-advanced disintegration of the Afghan armed forces. This process has not only continued but has accelerated. Various counteracting measures—for example, the January 1981 conscription law, which lowered the draft age and extended the obligatory tour of duty, and the September mobilization of all reservists up to age 35—have not helped.

Because of Afghanistan's mandatory service laws, the mobilization in September covered virtually the entire male population in the stipulated age bracket. The announcement provoked antigovernment demonstrations among students; eligible males took off for the hills, emptying government and business offices. The regime immediately began to back-track and announced a number of exemptions. It also quickly revised downward from 450,000 to 85,000 its estimates of eligible reservists. As the year ends, the results of the callup are unlikely to produce more than 15,000–20,000 able-bodied men, many of whom will desert as soon as possible. As it has throughout the past 2 years, the government must rely on press gangs to enforce the directive.

The September callup was obviously prompted by the scheduled discharge in December of perhaps half of the army's enlisted men. The government would prefer not to discharge any of those currently serving. It needs the men, but it also does not want to make available to the *mujahidin* such a large pool of trained soldiers. Nevertheless, it went

ahead with the discharge announcement on December 4, probably because it feared an explosive reaction to a further extension of service. Every effort, however, is being made to insure that those who are officially discharged actually remain in the army or related security services.

The ineffectiveness of the Afghan army has forced the Soviets to assume the lion's share of the burden of pacification. The events of 1981 suggest, however, that Soviet military operations in Afghanistan have been ineffective. They failed to dislodge the *mujahidin* from their strongholds and have been unable to organize a successful defense against *mujahidin* ambush operations even on the main road from the Soviet border to Kabul.

There are numerous signs that the Soviets are concerned about the progress of the war. They have recently introduced additional troops into the country and, while the number—about 5,000—is not large, it suggests that the Soviets think their forces are spread too thin to counteract the growing resistance. A high-level Soviet military delegation led by Deputy Defense Minister Sokolov has, as of mid-December, been in Kabul for a protracted stay. This visit, combined with a recent intensification of offensive operations, indicates that Soviet military authorities in Afghanistan are currently under pressure to produce results.

There is growing concern that this pressure will lead to an increased use of chemical warfare by the Soviets. Evidence of the use of lethal and casualty-producing chemical agents against the *mujahidin* is mounting. The most frequent application of these toxic agents is against *mujahidin* bases inside mountain caves, which are otherwise inaccessible to conventional aircraft or helicopter attack.

The failure of Soviet forces to achieve their objectives in Afghanistan can be explained by factors that are inherent in a confrontation between a large bureaucratic military machine in a foreign land and small mobile guerrilla units operating on their home ground. Poor Soviet morale also contributes to the lack of Soviet success as does the collusion between Afghan army personnel and the *mujahidin*.

The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan: A House Divided

For the Soviets, the most frustrating aspect of their failures in Afghanistan must be their continuing inability to achieve a truce between the two principal factions of the ruling party, the Khalqis and Parchamis. The deep-seated feud, which dates from the early days of the party in the late 1960s, has continued to rage throughout the past year. The numerically superior Khalqis are struggling to regain some of the power they lost when the Soviets installed Babrak's Parchamis at the time of the invasion. The Parchamis would like a thorough purge of the Khalqis, but the Soviets, mindful of Khalq strength in the military forces, continue to seek a reconciliation and have insisted on maintaining leading Khalqis in top positions.

The feuding was particularly intense during the weeks preceding the sixth plenum of the PDPA in June and a concurrent meeting of the Revolutionary Council to effect party and government organizational changes. The most important task was to name a prime minister, a job previously held by Babrak in addition to his duties as President and General Secretary of the PDPA. The Soviets may have hoped to use this change to achieve a better Khalq-Parcham balance; certainly the Khalqis lobbied hard to improve their position. Compromise, however, proved elusive. In the end the Soviets stuck by the Parchamis. The leading Parcham contender, Sultan Ali Keshntmand, became prime minister and the concurrent expansion of various party and government bodies also gave additional advantages to the Parcham faction.

The reorganization in June further exacerbated the split and led to renewed indications that the Khalqis, in their anger at the Soviets and the Parchamis, are cooperating with the *mujahidin*. In Babrak's mid-August speech to armed forces party activists, he lashed out at party factionalism, which he said was hindering efforts to improve military effectiveness.

Reports of a reactivated power struggle within the PDPA leadership in late November and early December were fueled by the prolonged absence from Kabul of Prime Minister Keshntmand, who spent almost 2 months in Moscow following an official visit to Bulgaria.

Keshntmand's name was not mentioned in the Afghan media during his absence. His return to Kabul on December 13 was a week too late to attend the seventh party plenum on December 7. The proceedings of this plenum have not been published, but the meeting is believed to have been preoccupied with the issue of party disunity and indiscipline.

The most disruptive factor on the political scene continues to be the Khalq effort to stage a comeback, but there are also periodic reports of splits within the Parcham faction that pit Keshntmand against Babrak. In spite of speculation that the Soviets are seeking an alternative to Babrak, however, their public support of him as of mid-December does not suggest that they are prepared to abandon him. On December 15, Babrak left Kabul to pay a state visit to Bulgaria. He stopped in Moscow en route to present Brezhnev with the Afghan Sun of Freedom Order in connection with the Soviet leader's 75th birthday.

Interneine fighting is not likely to abate. In view of the deteriorating security situation and the obvious failure of party and government policies, it is not surprising that the beleaguered leadership is wracked by mutual recriminations. It is becoming apparent that many top leaders want the Soviets to leave and are trying to distance themselves from the odious symbol of close association with the Soviet occupation.

In late 1981, the Afghan regime appears to be making a renewed effort to draw prominent members of former governments into participation in a more broadly based government. Although they may succeed with one or two figures who may have become dissatisfied with exile life, this approach is not likely to be very productive.

There are also reports of efforts to form a new party that would subsume the Khalq-Parcham problem. The Parchamis themselves have sponsored a major party recruitment drive throughout the year to reduce Khalq influence within the PDPA by significantly enlarging and broadening its membership. A high party official claimed in February 1981 that party membership had increased by 25% in the preceding 6 months. Babrak told the fifth party plenum in March that the character of the party was changing and that 25-30% of the new members were workers and farmers. At the sixth party plenum in June, Karmal stated that "thousands of

the best representatives of workers, peasants, craftsmen, employees, intelligentsia, students, and other social strata have been admitted to the party probationary membership."

Given the hazards associated with party membership (members are automatic targets for the *mujahidin* assassins), the recruitment drive is likely to have been less successful than Babrak claims. The lack of published, official figures on the size of the party suggests that it remains small.

Nationalist Resistance Movement

In contrast to the "sinking ship syndrome" that is undercutting morale in party and government circles, the morale of the *mujahidin* remains high, according to foreign visitors who have traveled with them recently. The freedom fighters can look back on a successful year during which they have put the regime increasingly on the defensive. The military situation remains a standoff, but one in which the initiative appears to lie with the *mujahidin*, although the Soviets retain the advantage of vastly superior firepower.

The major source of strength for the freedom fighters continues to be the overwhelming support they receive from the Afghan people, regardless of ethnic group or tribal affiliation. The Afghan people have suffered terribly during the past 2 years. Villages suspected of harboring *mujahidin* have been demolished in ground attacks and repeated aerial bombardment from helicopter gunships. In spite of high civilian casualties and the regime's constant flow of propaganda to discredit the resistance, the nationalist movement has continued to grow.

An important development, which has strengthened the effectiveness of the *mujahidin*, has been greater cooperation among resistance forces in the field. In a growing number of instances, including the campaigns in the Panjsher and at Paghman, freedom fighters from outside the immediate battle zone have come to help. Cooperation among resistance units has led to a more sophisticated military strategy.

The nationalist successes during 1981 are the result, in part, of more and better weapons acquired largely through raids on military supply convoys and access to Afghan army stocks. Although

the *mujahidin* are seeking aid throughout the Islamic world and the West, foreign visitors have observed during the past year that recent media reporting has greatly exaggerated the extent of external assistance. In many parts of the country, the *mujahidin* are still seriously underarmed in relation to the numbers of potential fighters.

While the resistance movement clearly has grown stronger and more effective throughout the year, the limits of its capabilities are clear. The *mujahidin* cannot mount a sustained offensive against a Soviet stronghold; they cannot drive Soviet forces away from major bases or the major cities; and to date they have not been able to take complete control of a provincial capital. If the *mujahidin* push too far—if they threaten to banish all symbols of Kabul's authority in a province—they, or more likely the local civilian population, inevitably will be subjected to ruthless retaliation.

The *mujahidin* have made great strides in cooperating within a given area and have taken tentative steps toward establishing a coordinating leadership council in common cause against the Soviets, but the resistance movement as a whole remains fragmented. It thus lacks the strategic advantages of national coordination. Furthermore, liberation forces occasionally fight each other to establish territorial preeminence. To succeed, these efforts at coordination will require setting aside deep divisions between fundamentalists and moderates, traditionalists and leftists, tribal chieftains and mullahs, Pushtuns and minority ethnic groups, and among numerous rival tribes.

Soviet Long-Range Plans

The Soviets are laying the groundwork for a permanent, predominant role in Afghan affairs. This effort is reflected in the numerous major steps taken during 1981 to remake party and government institutions in the Soviet image. It is also evident in the large numbers of Afghan students dispatched to the Soviet Union for higher education and technical training and in the steady stream of technical and educational delegations traveling between the two countries.

Afghanistan is also becoming more dependent on the Soviet Union for economic assistance and trade. In November 1980, Babrak stated that Moscow was supplying 80% of Afghanistan's foreign aid. In a recent article in *Pravda*, the pa-

per's correspondent in Afghanistan reported that trade turnover between the two countries had doubled in the last 5 years and that trade would treble by 1985.

Most official pronouncements on the Afghan economy are optimistic. The report on the 1981 budget delivered in March by then Deputy Prime Minister Keshntmand painted a relatively rosy picture, as did his economic report to the Revolutionary Council in September. But Keshntmand's speech to a seminar for local government officials in August revealed that the war has caused considerable economic paralysis. At that time, he indicated major concern about the collapse of the transportation system, about the shutting down of many factories and mines, and about inflation, which has risen sharply due to growing shortages.

The breakdown of the Afghan economy may make Afghanistan an expensive investment for the Soviets, at least in the short term. With much of the country in resistance hands, the government cannot collect taxes. The war has also caused a drop in agricultural production, which normally is a source of foreign exchange. On the plus side for the Soviets, however, they continue to receive natural gas from Afghanistan at a price well below what Moscow is asking from the West Europeans for natural gas from Siberia. Moscow's long-range planning undoubtedly envisions further integration of Afghanistan's economy with that of the Soviet Union.

International Spotlight on Afghanistan

The primary objective of the Babrak regime's foreign policy has been to obtain international recognition of the legitimacy of the government (and by extension of the Soviet presence that is required to keep the regime in power). This policy was formalized in the May 14, 1980, proposals, which were modified on August 24, 1981, and is based on the contention that the resistance movement is a creation of outside powers. Accordingly, both sets of proposals require the cessation of all resistance as a precondition for the beginning of the withdrawal of Soviet troops.

In November 1981, the international community once again demonstrated by a third overwhelming vote in the United Nations that it rejects the Babrak government's claim to legitimacy. The resolution also authorized U.N. Secretary General Waldheim to continue U.N. efforts to seek a political settlement. The U.N. mission, originally mandated in No-

vember 1980, and other international efforts to find an opening for a negotiated solution—such as the proposals put forth by the European Community—reflect widespread international concern over the continuing Soviet occupation.

In February 1981, U.N. Secretary General Waldheim appointed then Under Secretary General Perez de Cuellar as his personal representative to seek a political settlement. Perez de Cuellar traveled to Kabul and Islamabad in April and again in early August. Following the August visit, Afghanistan announced on August 24 a modification of its procedural conditions. It agreed to trilateral talks and to U.N. participation, whereas previously it had insisted on separate bilateral talks with Pakistan and Iran and had not publicly accepted an active role for the United Nations. Subsequently, during the autumn U.N. session, Waldheim and Perez de Cuellar met separately with the Foreign Ministers of Pakistan and Afghanistan and their representatives in New York.

It is not clear whether Perez de Cuellar, as U.N. Secretary General, will continue to take personal charge of this mission or whether he will name a representative. In either event, further U.N. visits to both countries are anticipated. Perez de Cuellar's intimate involvement in the Afghanistan problem should insure that it will receive priority attention.

Afghanistan's August 24 proposals also dealt with the plan of the European Economic Community, which had been presented to Moscow by the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, on July 6. This initiative called for a two-stage international conference to settle the Afghan question. The Soviets and the Afghans rejected this plan, presumably because it excluded Afghan representation altogether from the first stage and left the Babrak regime's status unclear. The August 24 proposals entertain the possibility of an international conference, but one which would seat the Babrak regime as the sole legitimate representative of the Afghan people. There has been no indication that the Soviets or the Babrak regime are willing to make concessions on any of the key substantive issues, including that of the withdrawal of Soviet troops.

Meanwhile, the Babrak regime, guided by its Soviet sponsors, has been trying other ploys to bolster its claim to legitimacy. The warm reception which Moscow gave Karmal during his state

visit in October 1980 clearly was designed to enhance his international stature. Likewise Karmal's visit to Czechoslovakia in June 1981 had a similar purpose, all the more obvious as it was timed to occur immediately after the founding congress of the NFF; the congress was to have demonstrated conclusively Karmal's claim to popular support in Afghanistan. Karmal also participated in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's 26th congress in February-March and was received by Brezhnev in the Crimea in July. The year was capped by the Afghan award presented to Brezhnev and by Babrak's state visit to Bulgaria.

A more difficult problem for the regime has been to demonstrate that conditions in Afghanistan are sufficiently settled to allow foreigners to visit Kabul safely. From November 18 to 20, the DRA staged a major propaganda event to prove this point by hosting the 10th Conference of the Presidium of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, a Soviet-front organization. The timing of the AAPSO conference indicates that it was designed to offset the bad press emanating from the Afghan debate and resolution at the United Nations, which was taking place simultaneously. The AAPSO delegates demonstrated full sup-

port for their host, but the extremely heavy security measures surrounding their visit must have made them uneasy. Furthermore, in spite of the security, the *mujahidin* fired several rockets at the Intercontinental Hotel, the site of the conference; there were no direct hits but some damage was done.

The international community is not impressed by efforts to dignify Babrak Karmal and to portray the situation in Afghanistan as stable. Objective observers find the swelling refugee population in Pakistan and Iran more revealing of the true state of affairs. Afghans in Pakistan now constitute the largest refugee population in the world; their numbers doubled during 1981 to about 2.5 million. The refugee population in Iran has also grown considerably and is now estimated at about 1 million.

Included among the refugees are many military defectors and an increasing number of former regime officials who testify to intolerable Soviet control over government ministries and the worsening security situation throughout the country.

It should be clear to Moscow that Afghanistan will not disappear as an issue of major international concern. On the contrary, the rising volume of "inside Afghanistan" reporting by foreign journalists who travel with the *mujahidin* has contributed significantly to a greater awareness of Soviet repression and of the war of liberation being fought by the resistance. On December 16, the European Parliament passed a resolution declaring the European intention to commemorate March 21, 1982, as Afghanistan Day. March 21 is the Afghan New Year and is traditionally celebrated by Afghans as their national day. Free nations around the world are expected to follow the European lead in making Afghanistan Day a demonstration of overwhelming international solidarity with the Afghan people in their struggle against Soviet occupation. ■

Published by the United States Department of State • Bureau of Public Affairs
Office of Public Communication • Editorial Division • Washington, D.C. • December 1981
Editor: Colleen Sussman • This material is in the public domain and may be reproduced without permission; citation of this source is appreciated.